

In the Claims

Please cancel Claim 23 without prejudice.

Please amend the following claims:

1. (Twice Amended) A biodegradable nonwoven web having a permeability within the range of about 500 to about 1500 μm^2 and a void volume that is greater than about 25 cm^3/gram , wherein the web comprises a first biodegradable binder fiber that does not undergo severe heat shrinkage and a second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber; and

wherein the biodegradable nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature within about 20°C above the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber, using only convective heating to thoroughly bind the web and to achieve the permeability and the void volume.

2. (Twice Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber is a multicomponent fiber comprising a surface component and a non-surface component.

17. (Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature within about 10°C above the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber.

18. (Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature within about 5°C above the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber.

20. (Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature 10 to 15°C above the melting temperature of the surface component of the first biodegradable binder fiber.

21. (Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature 5 to 10°C above the melting temperature of the surface component of the first biodegradable binder fiber.

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22. (Amended) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature 2 to 5°C above the melting temperature of the surface component of the first biodegradable binder fiber.

Please add the following new claims:

24. (New) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber and the second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber, each have a fiber length of at least about 25 millimeters.

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25. (New) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber and the second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber, each have a fiber length of about 25 to 50 millimeters.

26. (New) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded using a bonded carded web process.

27. (New) A biodegradable nonwoven web having a permeability within the range of about 500 to about 1500 μm^2 and a void volume that is greater than about 25 cm^3/gram , wherein the web comprises a first biodegradable binder fiber that does not undergo severe heat shrinkage and a second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber; and

wherein the biodegradable nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature within about 5°C below the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber, using only

convective heating to thoroughly bind the web and to achieve the permeability and the void volume.

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28. (New) The nonwoven web of claim 27, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber is a multicomponent fiber comprising a surface component and a non-surface component.

29. (New) The nonwoven web of claim 28, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded at a temperature 2 to 5°C below the melting temperature of the surface component of the first biodegradable binder fiber.